

PUBLIC TRANSIT ROLES IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The functions a transit system will be able to perform in an emergency response scenario will vary depending on the resources of the transit system and the needs and resources of the city or county in which it operates. Some possibilities for transit agency involvement in Texas include the following:

- evacuation of local residents during flooding, fires, hazardous-material spills, bomb threats, or other emergency conditions;
- transport of emergency workers and volunteers to and from an emergency staging site;
- supplemental transportation for people and supplies within a city or county during recovery from flooding or other area-wide disasters;
- use of air-conditioned/heated buses as shelter/respite facilities for emergency workers and victims; especially valuable during a fire or hazardous-material response effort;
- communications support, if buses are radio-equipped;
- monitoring road and weather conditions; determining safe travel routes; and
- providing supplemental vehicles for police or other local agency.

This is not an all-inclusive list, nor will all transit agencies be equipped to perform every role on this list. Each transit agency must assess its own resources, capabilities, and the potential needs and hazards that are likely to be faced within its city or county. Working with local governments and emergency response personnel, transit agencies can determine the functions that they are best able to fulfill within the jurisdiction's emergency management plan.

Resource and Capability Assessment

Resource and capability assessment is the first step in becoming involved with a community emergency management plan. A thorough assessment of the transit agency's facilities, equipment, and personnel will help to determine the emergency functions the agency is best suited to lead or support. A form is provided on the following page to assist in the initiation of that assessment.

As part of the capability assessment, two levels of emergency transit services may be defined. A low level of transit involvement, which utilizes only a small portion of the agency's vehicles, personnel, and other resources, would be indicated for a smaller-scale incident. A large-scale disaster may require more extensive use of transit resources, with regular transit service altered or suspended for the duration of the emergency. Houston METRO's definition of small-scale and large-scale emergency assistance is shown in the [example](#) on page 39.